

From the Chair...

“Just because everything is different doesn’t mean anything has changed.” — Irene Peter

That thought is appropriate because we still wrestle with many of the same problems on a daily basis even though the environment we work in changes rapidly, without warning, and on many fronts.

It becomes even more appropriate given some of the recent developments out of Harrisburg. A new version of the state library code is winding its way through the legislature which contains some broad implications for the practice of librarianship in Pennsylvania. Normally, such legislation does not appear on our radar, simply because it is aimed at the public library sector. However, this bill (H.B. 1884, full text available at www.libertynet.org/~delcolib/hb1884.html) contains provisions for the state licensure of library professionals in both the public and special environments (Sec. 901). I have conflicting opinions on this portion of the bill, I do not think that it serves any real purpose in its present form.

On a theoretical level, licensure would add legitimacy to our status as professionals. Similar to AHIP certification, licensure holds a certain amount of appeal, and affords the opportunity to use that enhanced status to advance not only in librarianship, but in other areas. It also has the potential to bring together some of our disparate groups since we then would have a common concern related to our professional practice.

However, on a practical level, the effect would be negligible, since whatever requirements were in place to get the license would have to be minimal unless every local library was prepared to hire a new librarian (or keep an “unlicensed” one — would there be a penalty for employing such a person?). In addition, since presumably every librarian would have to be licensed in order to get a job in the state, what additional status could result? Salaries would not be affected, nor would job security. It could also have a chilling effect on the pool of qualified librarians, since out-of-staters would have to obtain a license. In other professions such as nursing, the impact is minimal, given that the salaries paid to practitioners are sufficient to support licensure and examination fees. Librarians are the lowest paid professional group; thus, the burden becomes more of a challenge and has no tangible benefit. It would be better to emulate the board

certification model as in the medical profession. It is not necessary to be board certified to practice a medical specialty, but it adds status (and supposedly merit) to be board certified.

The mechanism for examination and certification is also certain to be a source of great controversy: What should the minimum requirements be? Do you know how to catalog? Answer these five reference questions in 25 words or less... Granted, those who have more than 10 years experience would be grandfathered in, but only for their present position. Thus, all of us could potentially face the licensing process. A great deal of food for thought.

Also at the site with the text of the entire bill is testimony by a librarian and a library trustee addressing some of the areas I have outlined above. I urge everyone to read the bill and the testimony and to communicate with your legislators about your concerns, as well as discussing it through the mailing list. I have been contacted by several people asking for the Chapter’s opinion on this bill and I said that I could not speak for us until the membership had a chance to look at the text. It is an important issue, and one I am sure we will hear about again, even if the present bill does not pass.

To close on a slightly more mundane level, I would like to thank everyone who came to the fall meeting which was very well attended and received. Thanks to Terrie for her work and hospitality. I learned quite a bit about QuickDOC that we will use when we upgrade our ILL computer next month.

Finally, I hope that everyone had a happy holiday season, and wish you all the best for the new year.

David Brennan
Chair, Pittsburgh Chapter

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N A T I O N A L N E W S

MLA Successfully Opposes NLM Cut

On the morning of July 30, MLA Headquarters staff learned that an amendment slashing \$2.5 million from NLM's 1998 appropriations would be offered in the U.S. House of Representatives later that day. With only hours to act, a successful action plan was developed to contact the key Congressional leaders about the importance of NLM's programs and services that support health care in the United States.

Through a series of phone calls with MLA's Washington Representative Dale P. Dirks, staff learned that the elected official proposing the amendment was interested in learning more about NLM's programs and services prior to taking action. The official promptly received a letter highlighting NLM's contributions to health care, and MLA members living in the official's district made phone calls to explain the importance of NLM in their geographical area.

Within a few hours, Mr. Dirks and MLA members who had responded to the call for action received phone calls from Capitol Hill telling them that the amendment would not be proposed. MLA Executive Director Carla J. Funk recognized the value of this crucial exchange: "On behalf of the members of the Medical Library Association, we are pleased that our elected officials take the time to listen to our message before making a decision that could severely impact our nation's access to health information."

Michele S. Klein Appointed to NLM Board of Regents

MLA member Michele S. Klein, AHIP, System Director, Library Services, Detroit Medical Center, was recently appointed to NLM's Board of Regents. The purpose of the Board of Regents is to advise, consult with, and make recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on matters related to the activities and policies of NLM. The Board of Regents also serves as the National Medical Libraries Assistance Advisory Board, which advises on general regulations relating to policy matters and the review of applications for grants and contracts.

Submissions Needed for an Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery DocKit

A new DocKit focusing on interlibrary loan and document delivery has been approved by the MLA Books Panel, and your submissions are needed. Contributions from all types of health sciences libraries are important and welcomed.

The following types of documents are needed as soon as possible:

- Docline lending policies
- Docline borrowing policies
- Policies regarding the use of document delivery vendors
- Policies regarding the use of Ariel
- Paper request forms
- Printouts of electronic request forms
- Brochures
- Bookmarks
- Other promotional material

Send submissions, accompanied with a completed copyright release form located at <www.mlanet.org/release.html>, to Marissa Smith, Loma Linda University, Del E. Webb Memorial Library, 1170 Anderson St., Loma Linda, CA 92350; 909-824-4300 x47562; asmith@dwebb.llu.edu.

Klein's appointment to this prestigious position will allow her to provide the Board with the unique viewpoint of medical librarians. She describes her important role enthusiastically: "In this position, I can impact the profession by advocating medical librarians' positions to NLM and providing insight to libraries on how NLM policies and programs affect the health sciences library environment." This year is wrapping up quite nicely for Klein. She learned of her promotion to System Director of Library Services at the Detroit Medical Center just a few weeks after being appointed to the NLM Board of Regents.

All articles in "National News" were submitted by: Tomi Gunn, National MLA.

Taking Care of Business, Planning for Our Future

Nancy Sakino Spears, Chapter Council Representative

The adage "nothing is constant but change" seems to be the motto of the Pittsburgh Regional Chapter members who have been proactively planning the future of our chapter. The spring meeting introduced an initial discussion concerning the declining membership and the future of our chapter. The membership took the discussion to heart stimulating membership from 60 to 78 paid members. A questionnaire was created to survey the chapter's future. We used data from 42 returned surveys to summarize respondents' feelings into a document that the members reviewed prior to the fall meeting.

During the Fall meeting an in-depth discussion was presented with more ideas and questions. Our Login Brothers Book representative suggested we confer with the Upstate New York/Ontario Chapter and the New York/New Jersey Chapter who were questioning the future of their chapters. Chapter Chair David Brennan asked that the data be presented to the membership, via the *Pulse*, including the pros and cons of changing the chapter's status or merging with another chapter:

Chapter Merger Pros

- Increase geographical membership for financial strength.
- Increase variety of leadership opportunities.
- Increase MLA programs and meeting sites.
- Increase CE opportunities.
- Increase professional networking.
- Distribute chapter operations/work load among a larger membership community.

Chapter Merger Cons

- Inability to provide equality to Pittsburgh Chapter members in a new chapter.
- Meeting will not be restricted to the regional Pittsburgh area.
- CE courses may increase in price.
- No local presence in health care arena.

After consulting with our neighboring chapters, we are not alone in our confusion about our chapter's future. The same issues are very real for the Upstate New York/Ontario Chapter whose boundaries are 7 hours from one end of the chapter to the other and the New York/New Jersey Chapter which has seen a slight decrease in membership, but a **definite decrease in participation**. Reasons are familiar: chapter doesn't meet

my needs, programs are not varied enough, no time, little employer support, SLA, ASIS, etc. have more creative approaches, large institutions can't identify with small hospitals, hospital mergers and managed care creating job stress.

Both chapters will continue as MLA chapters, but they will depend on local health care library associations to provide emotional support, reciprocal sharing, local presence, and hospital administrator awards.

Leadership in New York/Ontario has revised its role by decreasing chapter meetings to one annual meeting and one formal board meeting per year. Officer positions were also revised. Some positions have been shortened and some officers have taken a second term.

New York/New Jersey has recently restructured the chapter into several general areas: Operations, Networking and Advocacy. Each member is encouraged to participate in one of the areas to increase membership participation. Since all the changes are new, only time will tell if they will make a positive impact on their chapter's future.

Pittsburgh Chapter AHIP Members

Submitted by Peggy Trevanion
UPMC Passavant Hospital

The following Pittsburgh area health sciences librarians are members of the Academy as of January 13, 1998:

Joni Alex (M)	Heidi Marshall (M)
June Bandemer (D)	Mary Nourse (M)
David Brennan (M)	Gerry O'Leary (M)
Barbara Epstein (D)	Barbara Palso (S)
Carrie Everstine (M)	Rosemary Panichella (S)
Elain Gruber (S)	Jan Petrak (S)
Elena Hartmann (D)	Kathy Plaso (D)
Janet Heekin (M)	Nancy Sakino Spears (D)
Nancy Henry (M)	Ruth Shapiro (S)
Carol Ho (S)	Peggy Trevanion (S)
Susan Hoehl (S)	Fred Wilson (D)
Eve Kline (D)	Karen Zundel (D)
Colleen Lako (S)	

M - Member, S - Senior Member, D - Distinguished Member

Techline: SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, AND SPAM (with thanks to *Monty Python*)

Contributed by David Brennan, St. Francis Medical Center

SPAM as we knew it, was the luncheon meat that won World War II (it's still out there, and, fried with a slice of cheese, is a good sandwich!). Spam as we know it today is making us the loser in the war to handle the flood of information passing through our sights every day. So much for the military metaphors — spam is the term for the junk e-mail that clutters up our inbox, consisting of everything from get-rich-quick to diet schemes.

The major difference between junk e-mail and the paper kind is that junk e-mail involves cost to the recipient, in one way or another. Those of us who do not pay for e-mail service still incur a cost through our organizations having to provide sufficient bandwidth and disk space to store and manage e-mail, which has been estimated to be over 50 per cent junk mail on any given day.¹ If you pay for e-mail, you may be charged an additional fee for exceeding disk space allocations, even though it is not your fault for being flooded with spam. Because of the lack of cost to the advertiser, spam is very attractive, particularly coupled with software packages that “harvest” e-mail addresses from postings to Internet newsgroups or bulk e-mailers that use lists purchased from other advertisers.

The problem has gotten to the point that legal and legislative actions are being discussed, with much apprehension by the Internet community (remember the “Communications Decency Act?”). But at this point, there is no clear-cut way to deal with the spam epidemic.

Aside from spending hours wading through spam with one finger on the delete key, there are a few avenues that you can take to keep the junk to a minimum, and some methods by which you can identify the sender. Since “From:” and “Reply-To:” addresses can be easily forged (and in fact is a method you can use to keep off junk mail lists), the “Received:” header is the key to understanding the path that an e-mail message takes from the (anonymous) sender to your mailbox.² Once you have identified the initial sending domain, it is often useful to send a message to `postmaster@domain.name` with the spam attached. Internet service providers (ISPs) have become increasingly willing to terminate the accounts of spammers — they suffer as much as the individual subscriber since their infrastructure must be constantly upgraded to deal with a mass of essentially useless traffic.

Replying to the “sender” is mostly ineffective, as is replying to an address given to “remove” your name from the mailing list. Most junk mailers do not maintain their lists beyond taking off invalid addresses. That said, what can be done to limit the amount of spam you receive?

The best way is to not give out your address beyond what is necessary to conduct business. Every survey, registration card, and form seems to have a space for an e-mail address these days. Resist the temptation to fill it in! As mentioned above, you can also disguise your address. For example, in Netscape, you can put just about anything in the Identity configuration. Bear in mind, however, that the false address is what all recipients of your mail will see. (Do not use someone else's address — make up a fake one, preferably a combination of letters and numbers — the harvesting software can filter out many “message” addresses like `me@ihatespam.com`). You can always put your real e-mail address in the body of the message or the signature, where it is unlikely to be found by software looking at headers. Harvesting software looks at newsgroups and listservs to cull addresses; thus, another method of cutting your spam is to not post messages to groups. Since this defeats the purpose of the group, however, you can post via an anonymous e-mailer that strips the headers off before sending.

A final solution is to investigate filtering options. These are dependent on the capabilities of your e-mail software and are only partially effective since they operate by blocking mail from specific domains (i.e., everything from `spammer.com` or `aol.com`). This may lead to filtering out legitimate messages and also requires maintenance on the user's part to keep up with new domain names that send spam. You can also check with your ISP to see if they have taken any measures to combat spam. If none of these solutions work, and since spam is like junk mail (once you are on one list, you'll be on a hundred), a drastic solution is to change your e-mail address and be extremely careful who gets it. We are seeing history repeat itself: like the telephone, e-mail was once a novelty, then a necessity. As with any new medium, some marketer will find a way to annoy us. The best we can hope for is to keep it bearable.

Send suggestions or comments to:

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1. Evans, James. “E-Mail overload.” *Internet World* 8(12):55-8 (December 1997).
2. Glass, Brett. [Help Desk column] “E-mail headers can help diagnose problems, identify spammers.” *Infoworld* 19(44):52 (November 3, 1997).

Stethoscoop

Compiled by **Cindy Robertson, The Medical Center, Beaver, PA**

- ◆ **WANDA KINCAID**, Chief Librarian of the Louis A. Johnson, Veterans Administration Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia, passed away suddenly on December 19, 1997. We express our heartfelt sympathy to her family and friends, as well as to her colleagues in Clarksburg and the Chapter. Memorial donations to the American Cancer Society are encouraged in lieu of flowers. *Editor's note: a full article will appear in the next issue of the Pulse.*
- ◆ The Hospital Libraries Section of MLA presented former Pittsburgh Chapter Chair **EVE KLINE** with a Professional Recognition Award for Leadership at its annual business meeting in Seattle. The section noted Eve's many outstanding contributions and achievements, including: establishing a network of mental health librarians, contributing to the development of the Pennsylvania Interlibrary Loan Code, receiving funding for over \$200,000 in grants, and publicizing our profession via her radio show. The Pennsylvania Library Association also awarded Eve a Certificate of Merit. We are proud of Eve's accomplishments and grateful for the leadership and service she provided the Chapter.
- ◆ The West Penn Hospital School of Nursing Library has a new librarian. **CAROL CONSTANTINE** began her job there in October 1997. Prior to her current position, Carol developed and managed an information service at General Nutrition. Carol is a native of Pittsburgh and a 1990 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh SLIS. She has commented that those chapter members with whom she has had contact have been so very helpful and she appreciates all the kindness she has been shown. We will look for Carol at our chapter meetings and will continue to offer her, and all other newcomers, the help, guidance and support that has always been recognized as characteristic of Pittsburgh Chapter members.
- ◆ **JOAN FRASIER** has left her position at the Oncology Nursing Society to pursue other professional and personal interests. We know that Joan will keep active in the field of librarianship and we wish her well in all she does.
- ◆ **MARK VRABEL** is the new librarian with the Oncology Nursing Society, effective January 12, 1998. Mark comes to ONS with a Master of Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh (1992). Prior to joining the Society he was employed for four years by Penn State University at the Assistant Librarian rank, both as a Reference Librarian at the McKeesport and Monroeville sites, and as Acting Head Librarian for Penn State New Kensington. He is presently a member of the American Library Association and the Library Advisor for the Oakbridge Academy of Arts. Mark's e-mail address is Mvrabel@ons.org. We welcome Mark to medical librarianship and look forward to working with him.

FOUR EASY WAYS TO GET YOUR INFORMATION INTO NEXT ISSUE'S STETHOSCOOP

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The Medical Center
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Phone: 412-773-1940

Fax: 412-728-7429

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Note: Be sure to include your name, business address, and telephone number with the news you are submitting for "Stethoscoop."

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